

March 2, 1920
'The Living Age brings the World to America.'

FOUNDED 1844
BY E. LITTELL

VOLUME 306
NUMBER 3966

THE LIVING AGE

SATURDAY

JULY 10, 1920

A WEEK OF THE WORLD

The Right to Strike — Rivals in the Ukraine — Russian Incidents — Is Europe Doomed? — More Trouble in Spain — Arab Voters in Algiers — American Army Supplies in France — The German Elections — Coal from Turkey.

The Abuse of the Right to Strike	PAUL BOURGET	68
Pages from a German War Diary	FRITZ VON UNRUH	71
A Passing Conversation	AROZIN	75
Ex Oriente Lux!	HANS WENDT	77
An Attempt to Interpret Russia	'DEMONAX'	82
The Terror in Budapest	WILLIAM FORGO	90
Swords and Ploughshares	H. E. WINCKLER	91

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

Shakespeare's Henry V		94
The Passing of William Dean Howells	EDMUND GOSSE	98
More About Lincoln	LORD CHARNWOOD	100
Gypsies		108
A Nocturne of Steel	E. N. SIMONS	111
Socialism and Liberal Ideals	BERTRAND RUSSELL	114
A Page of Verse		
Encounter	ROBERT NICHOLS	124
Down in the Glen	ALICE COLLY	124

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as if to ward off a blow. 'Oh! don't say that!' he cried. 'I could n't bear it; I could n't write a line if I thought such things were happening.'

He composed two novels of exact ob-

servation and pathetic humor, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, the latter published in 1889. These ought to keep his memory green in perpetuity.

[*The Anglo-French Review*]

MORE ABOUT LINCOLN

BY LORD CHARNWOOD

THE few recorded acts and words of Lincoln's which can at all be associated with Anglo-American relations must wait. Only it may be said at once that he had neither that kind of heart nor that kind of brain from which international hatreds and international prejudices spring. It would not have been possible to him to regard any aggregate of human beings, such as a nation, without good-will; nor could his intellect have framed any of those generalizations which enable one people to feel superior to another people without understanding them.

Indeed, Lincoln's supreme distinction was made up of incapacities of this sort. There is a kind of goodness — now and then amounting to astonishing greatness — which is most easily, though rather delusively described by negatives, because the correct positive terms for it sound either tame or stilted. It consists in being just humanly right in what seem at first very ordinary ways, and continuing equally right under circumstances which make it extraordinarily hard to remain so. Contrasting as they do in so many ways, the two American heroes, Washington and Lincoln, were both marked out by this illustrious form of qualities

which at first present the delusive appearance of being ordinary. They pursued a path of very plain wisdom; only they did so when hardly anybody else pursued it, and when to do so demanded in reality the greatest steadiness of head, and largeness of heart, and singleness of aim.

It may seem, for instance, in Lincoln's case, a very commonplace political opinion to have held, that slavery ought not to be further extended in practice or sanctioned in principle, but that the constitutional rights of the South were to be respected and its inherited sentiments only temperately condemned. But, if we try to realize the changing political conditions and the shifting currents of popular feeling amid which his last ten years were passed, we discern that his unshaken maintenance of this balanced principle throughout meant genius and heroism.

This, if I may say so, is the main point of the protracted argument which recurs through a large part of my book. Fuller acquaintance with the literature of the subject and with the views of better judges than myself now furnish me with further illustrations of it; but instead of laboring the matter, I may be allowed to make a

bold and summary confession of the phases which my judgment of Lincoln has undergone. Nobody who plunges into the details of his history with a preconception that his was an heroic figure will escape a period, if only a brief period, of disillusionment. That Lincoln was in many respects a very lovable creature remains quite evident, and the loneliness of his situation awakes an increasing sympathy; but he was continually associated with transactions which were in no way dignified, and his apparent mistakes and weaknesses soon begin to seem very numerous and sometimes glaring. But there is far more than that: concerned though he was in a noble cause and a mighty struggle, the qualities—for which one looks—of high enthusiasm, bold insight, and decisive leadership, seem to be conspicuously absent just where one expects to find them.

A clergyman who lately settled in Illinois went there a vague worshiper of Lincoln; what he heard there convinced him very soon that Lincoln was a mere 'ward politician'; and this is quite intelligible, for some of the best of Lincoln's contemporaries saw little more in him than that. Yet it is quite impossible to pursue the study, obtaining at one point after another a comprehensive view of the circumstances in which Lincoln was placed, and ascertaining what were the actual alternatives before him, without finding again and again that what seemed his great mistakes were really right; and what still seem his minor mistakes become very trivial matters. It is impossible to go on without discovering further that, where enthusiasm seemed lacking, there was really an uncommon and steadily growing self-devotion to the largest good; and, where leadership was least apparent, there was profound originality and dauntless tenacity of purpose.

At any rate, the result of a very candid attempt to scrutinize Lincoln's record without condoning his faults or falsely idealizing his merits was that my estimate of him rose higher and higher as I wrote. And the result of later knowledge, which has made me very fully alive to the severest criticisms which can be passed upon him, is to place him still higher in my view. This is not my own experience alone: my instructor and fellow student, Mr. John T. Morse, has, I gather, gone through precisely the same. Moreover, I think it can be safely said that, in the calm judgment of the wisest Americans, the view of Lincoln which many of them inherited, which allowed him few great qualities beyond his unquestionable honesty, has steadily given way to a view which ranks him as one of the great statesmen of the world. This deliberate judgment as to his greatness is not that of scholars only; it is the judgment of great men of affairs who, being scholars as well as men of affairs, have tended, consciously or unconsciously, to hold him up as a pattern to themselves.

It is a familiar and well-established paradox that genius is apt to have in it something extraordinarily simple, the highest elevation of character to possess a kind of plain and homespun quality, and the truest poetry to be strangely near to common matter-of-fact. The explanation of this puzzle, if indeed we could thoroughly explain it, need not detain us here; but, of course, the peculiar charm, which belongs to Lincoln more than to most characters of history, consists in the peculiar force with which the paradox presents itself in his case. If, then, I recur often to the simple and the common in Lincoln, I shall not be misunderstood as ignoring either the complexity of his character or the force and versatility of his intellect.

I shall first, however, deal frankly with whatever in him was not merely simple, but weak, and not merely common, but slightly shabby.

Now the minor weaknesses of Lincoln's conduct, to which I am about to refer, all hang on the fact that he was a 'politician,' in the sense, not necessarily damnatory, but certainly far from laudatory, which that word now bears in America. He was steeped, since first he began to know either men or books, in the traditions of that political system which was coming into full force while he was a boy; and he accepted it with childlike simplicity as part, for the present, of the natural order in this very imperfect world. Many things that we call jobs seemed to him merely fair play toward the men he had been working with. Add to this that he had an immense fund of good-nature, hated to disoblige a friend or one whom he respected, and, in things short of first-rate importance, found it hard to say 'No.' Add, further, that his weakness displayed itself most fully when he first found himself saddled with a great administrative task for which no previous experience had trained him — the converse fact that his character steadily grew during his Presidency, being perhaps his greatest title to fame.

These observations bring me to the act of his official life for which least justification can be found. Generally speaking, the fresh light which the publication of contemporary memoirs throws from time to time upon any act for which he has been blamed is apt to be a favorable light; but it is, I think, otherwise with the appointment of Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania as his first Secretary of War. Cameron had the reputation of a tricky and corrupt man, and before Lincoln got rid of him the country had had to pay through the nose for his lax administration of

the War Office. Lincoln said to friends, who tried to prevent the appointment, that it was necessary to secure that support from Pennsylvania without which his administration, which needed all the strength it could gain, would have been weak. This object might have been a sufficient one, but it does not seem that this particular appointment was really necessary for the purpose, and Lincoln's rather pitiful efforts to get Cameron to withdraw his claims show that he was ill at ease on the subject.

The truth of the matter appears to be this. David Davis, the sturdy old Illinois judge who did perhaps more than any other man for Lincoln's career, and had charge of his interests at the Republican Convention which chose him as its candidate for the Presidency, had bought Cameron's support in the Convention by the promise of a seat in the Cabinet. The promise had really carried no authority from Lincoln, and, indeed, was contrary to express instructions from him. But Lincoln found it hard to stand up against the pressure of David Davis, to whom he owed so much and who was the man of greatest weight with whom he was familiar at the time. But, besides, there was a real perplexity for his conscience, since the goods had been delivered upon the strength of that promise. In the light of Cameron's subsequent achievements it is obvious that the unjust imputation of having cheated Cameron should have seemed a lesser evil than the actual making of a scandalous appointment to Cabinet office. Most presidents or prime ministers, in the like case, but with the larger experience of affairs which such men usually bring to bear on their difficulties, would instinctively have felt the danger of placing an unsatisfactory man in the War Department at such a time, and been rela-

tively callous about going back upon Davis or giving Cameron a good grievance. But the difference would have been one of training and not of morals.

However that may be, this is the exact size of the one important transaction for which Lincoln can be gravely blamed; it is pretty evident that now and again he made some bad appointments to civil offices afterwards, under more or less analogous pressure, or with the same sort of laxity partially redeemed by good-nature. But none of these appointments were important; they easily may be excused in a man sore burdened all the time with weightier cares; his military appointments, which must be mentioned later, must be criticized or defended on grounds of quite another kind. Here then is a fair sample of Lincoln at his very worst; and let any man with knowledge of his own ways of acting make the worst of it that he can.

Lincoln I have said was a 'politician'; he actually liked political combination and manœuvre, and had acquired considerable skill at that game when the issues at stake were such indifferent questions as whether the state capital should be at Springfield or at one of half a dozen other places just as well situated for the purpose, and no better. It is a dangerous sort of skill, and attributing it to a man sounds like attributing to him all manner of meanness, though in Lincoln it signified a power of dealing with men in the mass, which grew into large-minded and noble statesmanship. He was also personally ambitious in a peculiar degree. This may not be conspicuous to us from his record, but I cannot set aside the testimony which men who had known him long bore to this feature of his character. Ambition again, though certainly a man should possess it, does not sound a very amiable quality. It is only by recognizing

fully in Lincoln this neutral, if dangerous, foundation of his character,—that he was an ambitious politician,—that we can begin to see where he touched upon heights beyond the virtue of most of us.

Again and again he gladly postponed his personal chances to his strict loyalty toward a colleague, or to the advantage of the cause for which he was working—in fact, the most salient instances of his skill in the base game of politics are those in which he did this very thing. Things like this are hard for any man to do; in a thoroughbred politician of great ambition they are proof—let us say advisedly—of a moral purity, which the trivial blemishes in his record only throw into higher relief. There is hardly another statesman on record of whom we do not sometimes suspect that the personal motive of rivalry, or vanity, or pique, or rancor governed his course. There is, literally, so far as I can discover, no incident in Lincoln's career in which the presence of these motives has been or can be suggested.

Harder still would it be to demand of any man that in all the embarrassments and provocations of public life his words should be undeviatingly truthful; nor does any public man easily earn such a reputation. Now this is on the whole the most striking thing in the many discussions that come to hand by fair and well-informed contemporaries on disputed points in Lincoln's life. If a statement by Lincoln comes into conflict with a statement of some other man, however honorable in the main, actual falsehood on the part of the other man presents itself as a possible solution of the puzzle, falsehood on Lincoln's part never.

But there is a rarer kind of truth. It is easy not to be a great liar, but it is very hard to be uniformly sincere in public expressions of sentiment. Many

years ago, a very true and brave English statesman, William E. Forster, visited Springfield, Illinois, for the dedication of the monument on Lincoln's grave. He was a man to whom all the pettier things in political life were supremely odious. Many things were naturally told him, in the free and friendly intercourse which he then enjoyed with many men who knew Lincoln, illustrating — very fully we may be sure — the 'ward politician' in Lincoln. In writing home he notes that they were told him, and brushes them aside as wholly unimportant beside a single anecdote of another kind of which he received first-hand evidence. In the course of the Lincoln-Douglas debates a friend criticized some intended utterance of Lincoln's. He agreed entirely with its substance, but pointed out what an excellent effect might be produced by a slightly greater warmth of expression at one point. His advice was useless. The words as they stood were what Lincoln felt, and he would rather, he said, be defeated, than mislead the people '*by a single adjective.*' Nor did he ever do so. Was there ever another public man who even aspired to reach that standard?

Innumerable reminiscences, each by itself imponderable, have combined since Lincoln's death to create for him a fame which stands in sharp contrast with the impression formed of him by his contemporaries — save a few who were exceptionally privileged in their knowledge of him or exceptionally gifted with insight. But this fame does not rest on any definite achievement so manifestly due to him that no others claim a share in it. Thus it may be worth while to go on for some pages further, dealing, as fairly as I can, with all the considerations which suggest a doubt whether he was a very great man after all. I have clearly

pointed out that there would be literal truth in classifying him as a very ambitious man willingly immersed throughout a great part of his life in the pushing and the plotting of ordinary politics. But I have also pointed out that, just when we do take Lincoln on this not very promising level, and interest ourselves in the precise circumstances of the pushing and plotting, we come upon the shining splendor of his flawless generosity, his unswerving disregard of self at every real call, his utter sincerity of thought and of speech.

This point needs no further elaboration. Very little study is needed to show him as, in these respects, a very great man, perhaps unique in history in the nobility of his clean and healthy ambition. But I may here set down one story, which is not widely known, but which, for reasons that I shall not give, I believe to be certainly true. There were occasions, although they were rare, when some very intimate friend might find Lincoln in tears of passionate grief. One of these happened shortly after the battle of Gettysburg, when he received the news that Lee had withdrawn his army safe back across the Potomac without being attacked by Meade. To the friend who discovered him in his first agony of disappointment, Lincoln explained why he felt about the matter with such intensity of personal feeling. In his anxiety to stir the excellent General Meade to risk an enterprising offensive, he had resorted to a singular step. He had sent Meade an order, signed by himself as Commander-in-Chief, to attack. He had sent with it a short private letter in which he said that no copy existed either of the order or of the letter. The reader may be left to think out the full implication of this.

It is, of course, one thing to be

great as Lincoln thus certainly was, and another thing actually to have done great work. I am about to pass to the more difficult question of exactly what he did, but should like to point out the sense in which, though he may not altogether strike us as a characteristic American, Lincoln is a national possession of his people. It has puzzled me that most, if not all, of the American books which I have read about him give no adequate answer to the questions: What did he accomplish? What were the specific services that he rendered to his country in the Civil War or before it? What did he do so well that some other man in his place would not have done it better? The baffling situation in which he constantly stood is exposed; the pungent criticisms which his policy provoked from divers quarters is abundantly set forth; and facts which gave color to those criticisms are revealed. But the criticisms are left unanswered; the tangled course of affairs is related in its bewildering intricacy; the care-worn figure of the President is left sitting at the centre and saying, 'I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me'; and in no book (unless it be the masterly little volume which Major Putnam wrote for his sons) is there a real attempt to explain why this patiently suffering person should be regarded as the hero of it all.

We may discover in him the heroic strength and the potent control of events which he himself disclaimed. Why do not his compatriot admirers more clearly point them out? I think that, when we notice the prevailing tone of their praise of him, a very good reason for this apparent want of appreciation appears. It may seem paradoxical, when we think of the less pleasing qualities which untraveled Europeans are wont, and perhaps es-

pecially at this crisis, to associate with America; but the fact is that thorough and truly patriotic Americans have no wish to put their national heroes in competition with the conquerors and potentates, the 'strong men' and the 'super-men' who occupy the chief places in the history of older peoples. It is relatively uninteresting to them that Lincoln had 'a giant's strength,' as he certainly had; but it commands their unstinted veneration that he did not 'use it like a giant.' Their national pride is content to claim Washington and Lincoln as the first great exceptions to the rule that power breeds lust of power (in a third great crisis of their history they have been less fortunate in their leader, and an ambition which appeared self-centred, ungenerous, and vindictive has been followed by a nemesis swift and implacable).

The element of gentleness, which accompanied, or indeed constituted, Lincoln's strength, has arrested popular attention and has satisfied it. Lincoln could, in fact,—so the tradition received from some who were near him tells us,—be positively awful when something cruel or meanly treacherous made him, for once in a way, angry. But fame has not fastened on that side of him; it is glory enough for the American strong man that (to speak broadly) 'no one stood in awe of Lincoln.'

But if he was a great and successful ruler of men because he was something bigger and something dearer to simple human minds than that, we need no longer doubt that, judged by more common tests, he ranks very high as a statesman. I say 'no longer' because most searching doubts have often been raised, first, as to whether he contributed any great amount of firmness or ability to the conduct of the war; secondly, as to whether in the

broad issue between slavery and freedom he contributed any exceptional elevation and enlightenment of aim. Both questions are still deserving of attention, because in truth the wisdom which he displayed in both respects was of a rare and subtle kind. I am here concerned with the first alone.

There is, fortunately, no need to follow Lincoln's war administration in great detail. There is no occasion to claim for him that he made no great mistakes in a business in which, beyond all others, except that of life itself, every man makes mistakes; and the test of him is not their rarity, but the way in which he lives them down. Presumably he made many, though it is curiously seldom that we know enough of the circumstances to be quite sure that they were mistakes. The question can, as it happens, be treated on very broad lines. For an imposing mass of criticism seems to concur in an adverse judgment upon him, but will be found on sober consideration to rest on mutually contradictory grounds. We shall find, then, that Lincoln's reputation has suffered from a mass of censure which is radically unsound. If we go a little further and take one or two instances of the sort of fault that is imputed to him, we shall find him displaying a firm grip of the essential facts in which no other man on the Northern side, except Grant, seems to compare with him.

One of the ablest and truest of his Illinois contemporaries, Lyman Trumbull, who became Republican Senator for that state when Lincoln first hoped for that office, recorded for his son a character of Lincoln in which the bulk of the keen Republicans in Congress during the war would certainly have agreed. In many points he speaks generously of his eminent lifelong rival: 'He never misled me by

word or deed. He was truthful, compassionate, and kind.' But he condemns him for 'want of system, hesitancy, and irresolution'; 'as President during a civil war he lacked executive ability and that resolution and prompt action essential to bring it to a speedy and successful close'; 'a man of more positive character, prompt and systematic action, might have accomplished the same result in half the time and with half the loss of blood and treasure.'

Beside this courageous pronouncement we might set the verdict of some military critics who, taking at its full value his patience, loyalty, and determination, are obsessed by the thought of his ignorance of war, his tendency at one time to interfere, his appointments of 'political' generals, and his occasional discord with trained commanders. In reality the two destroy each other.

Lincoln's political critics on his own side, like Mr. Trumbull, suffered from an illusion, common in similar cases, that a sufficiently enthusiastic and impulsive partisan could have finished the war 'in half the time,' as it were by one blast of his mouth. This idea, which dominates half the criticism of Lincoln, was, seriously, all folly. The conquest of the South, which alone could achieve their real purpose, was, as every military historian clearly sees, a stupendous enterprise. The only very good military advice which for a long time Lincoln had at his command was that of the aged Scott. Scott from the first saw the gigantic nature of the task. Lincoln saw it, too, though he saw just one thing more — that the fighting spirit of the North could not be held in leash indefinitely. The prompt and decisive action which was to end the war was a mere dream. Unhappily, too, the prompt and capable commanders, of

the calibre of Lee, who were to carry out this action were also non-existent. Lincoln through half the war was contending with a terrible disadvantage. He had no lack of generals at hand who were energetic, or who were professionally competent, or who were honest and patriotic; but he had none who were all three. The notion which Mr. Trumbull and others entertained, that Lincoln had only to get rid of military pedants and appoint good, rousing, practical men who were sound politically, was found, in sufficient instances, a disastrous mistake. They associated his continued employment of real though mediocre soldiers, on a task which eventually proved hard for great soldiers, with the political caution which made him at the same time nurse the susceptibilities of the Border States. They were wrong there, too. There cannot be a doubt now that if he had alienated those states at the beginning, he would have lost the war right away. Altogether, then, it would be found that, in a just view of the military situation, the class of criticism from which Lincoln's reputation suffered the most shrivels up.

The purely military criticism does not lend itself so easily to summary treatment, because, of course, it turns on numberless instances of detail, and it is *a priori* certain that, in many of these, the man at the head would be wrong. But it may be gathered up under two heads: the allegation that Lincoln was apt to appoint unqualified commanders for political reasons, and the allegation that for a period he was wont to interfere injudiciously. As to the first, it is not possible to mete out exact justice in the feud which certainly prevailed between the professional soldier, who was not always all that a soldier should be, and the untrained or half-trained volunteer,

who was not always a failure. It may be enough to point out that there was a real difficulty in the situation, of which no possible solution would have silenced complaint. There were not enough trained officers to go round, outsiders had to be brought in, and promising men had to be given their chance. The only 'political' reason which prevailed with Lincoln in this matter was a valid political reason, vital to the winning of the war: the North had to be held together and the fighting spirit of its different sections utilized and not damped down. Mr. Trumbull, and a hundred other sturdy supporters of the cause far less fair and placable than he, were pressing all the time that Lincoln should sack every West Pointer and rely on sound patriots, real or pretended, like Banks or Butler, to put things through. Even the rashest of Lincoln's appointments, that of Frémont, was the appointment of a popular leader, with a sort of military reputation, whom it was really perilous — to the cause, not to Lincoln — to pass over. On the whole we may safely conclude that in a branch of administration, notoriously difficult at all times, and in his case maddeningly perplexing, he displayed a balanced and a patient judgment.

The real source of a certain abiding military displeasure with him may be traced to his unhappy relations with McClellan. The facts as to these relations are now before us in full detail, and they prove at least an almost superhuman patience with a subordinate who for long was really indispensable and throughout was all but impossible.

The remaining accusation, of undue interference with his generals, can readily be brought to an issue. There was a period when Lincoln endeavored to abstain altogether from any such interference; there was a period when

he felt driven to practise it pretty freely; and, finally, a period when he was able to return to his chosen attitude of leaving all to the men whom he trusted. As to the period of interference, there are only two important questions to be asked: Why did Lincoln hamper McClellan in the peninsula by withholding troops that McClellan wanted there? Why, on the other hand, after Antietam, did he unremittingly but unavailingly spur McClellan to bolder action, and do the same with Meade after Gettysburg? The answer in each case is similar. Lincoln knew, what McClellan wholly ignored, that even a certainty of taking Richmond would not be worth an appreciable risk of losing Washington. Later on, Lincoln knew, what McClellan and Meade could not see, that any fair chance of smashing Lee's army was well worth the risk of any reverse that Lee could then have inflicted on his pursuers.

These crucial instances are enough to prove that the interferences complained of were not wanton or unwise; and it would be easy, in fact, to find other instances which suggest, as these do, that his judgment of the great problems of the war was remarkably sound.

As a war administrator, then, he was at least not liable to the censures which have actually been cast upon him; and while it is certain that few administrators have been subjected to so great a strain, it may be doubted whether many have made so few serious mistakes.

[*The New Statesman*]

GYPSIES

COMPLAINTS have appeared in the press lately that gypsies are dangerously on the increase in England. Borrow would have been surprised had he

been told that such a thing would be possible in the year 1920. He took it practically for granted that gypsies would have disappeared from England by the end of the nineteenth century. Gypsies had survived persecution; it was doubtful if they could survive the evolution of civilized society. Yet here they are to be found among the Surrey hills to-day, their numbers reinforced by gypsy fugitives from Belgium and France during the war. They are a race as ubiquitous and as inextinguishable as the Jews. Unlike the Jews, however, they are held together, not by a common tradition of home, but by a common tradition of homelessness. They are the only race in the civilized world that did not care a penny for the Peace Conference. They are totally uninterested in the map of Europe. They have neither an empire nor a capital to sing a song about. They have stolen most things in their time, but they never stole a country.

Even so, they are human. They lie about themselves and their past. When they began their wanderings over Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they declared that they had come from Little Egypt and were on their way to Rome to do penance for the sin of their race. Their fathers, they said, had refused to receive the infant Jesus when Joseph and Mary had fled into their country during the persecution of Herod. Like Cain, they were exiles under a curse.

Another story, heard by Borrow in Spain, traced back the origin of their wanderings to a still earlier manifestation of the Divine wrath. There was once a great king called Pharaoh, the story ran, who, having conquered the world, resolved to make a war on God. God, for his part, refused to fight with a mere man. At the same time, in his anger, he decided to punish Pharaoh, and, opening an abyss in a mountain,